

WILLIAM CUMMINGS AND
MARY ANN MEEKS
CUMMINGS



William Cummings, born July 30, 1835, in Gibson County, Tennessee, son of John and Rachel Canarda Cummings. William married Mary Ann Meeks (born November 23, 1844, daughter of William and Mary Elizabeth Rhodes Meeks) October 23, 1861, at Provo, Utah. Died January 28, 1922, at Kanosh, Utah.

William Cummings was the son of John and Rachel Canarda Cummings, born in Gibson County, Tennessee, July 30, 1835. He came to Utah with his parents in the John Maxwell company.

In the fall of 1857 William went up the Provo River with Joseph Parker, where they were trapping beaver, and came into the Provo Valley. They stayed there all winter and trapped. In the spring they built four cabins. That summer William Cum-

mings, Joseph Parker, Andrew Ross, William Meeks, and William Wall brought their livestock into the valley and wintered them on Meek's Bottom.

During the winter of 1859-60 these men moved to Center Creek and built a sawmill in Center Creek Canyon. William Cummings plowed the first ground in this valley. In 1860, 17 families moved to Provo Valley, among them being the parents of William and John Cummings.

William joined in the Black Hawk War. He had learned to talk with the Indians and acted as an interpreter. Chief Tabby, with a group of Indians, called at his home and demanded he make a treaty. He took the Indians to an official who was plowing a field and there a final treaty was made. This ended the Indian troubles around Heber.

William Cummings married Mary Ann Meeks, daughter of William and Mary Elizabeth Rhodes Meeks, October 23, 1861, at Provo, Utah. She was born November 23, 1844.

To them were born the following children: William, Mary Elizabeth, John, Rachel, Nancy Jane, Ada Eveline, Sarah Ann, Mary Ann, Harvey, Isaac, and Eva.

The William Cummings family and Andrew, Thomas and Robert Ross moved to southern Utah and settled at Corn Creek, which was later named Kanosh. William Cummings died January 28, 1922, at Kanosh, Utah.

(Taken from history of Eva Cummings Johnson and "History Book of the Early Utah Pioneers.")

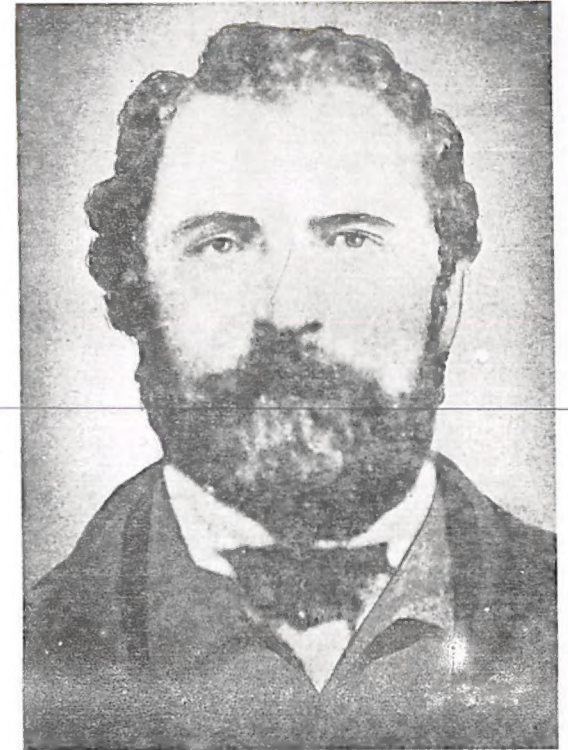
brought. Before the main group of Indians returned a runner came back from Chief Tabby and was immediately taken into the Indian agent's house without seeing the Mormons. Colonel Head, the Indian agent, had come out with the expedition and admonished the Indians not to take the cattle as a present from Brigham Young. He even tried to buy them for the Government to present to the Indians, but Wall flatly rejected the offer, saying, "No sir, you can't buy them, for they are Mormon cattle, and if the Indians eat them they will eat Mormon beef."¹¹

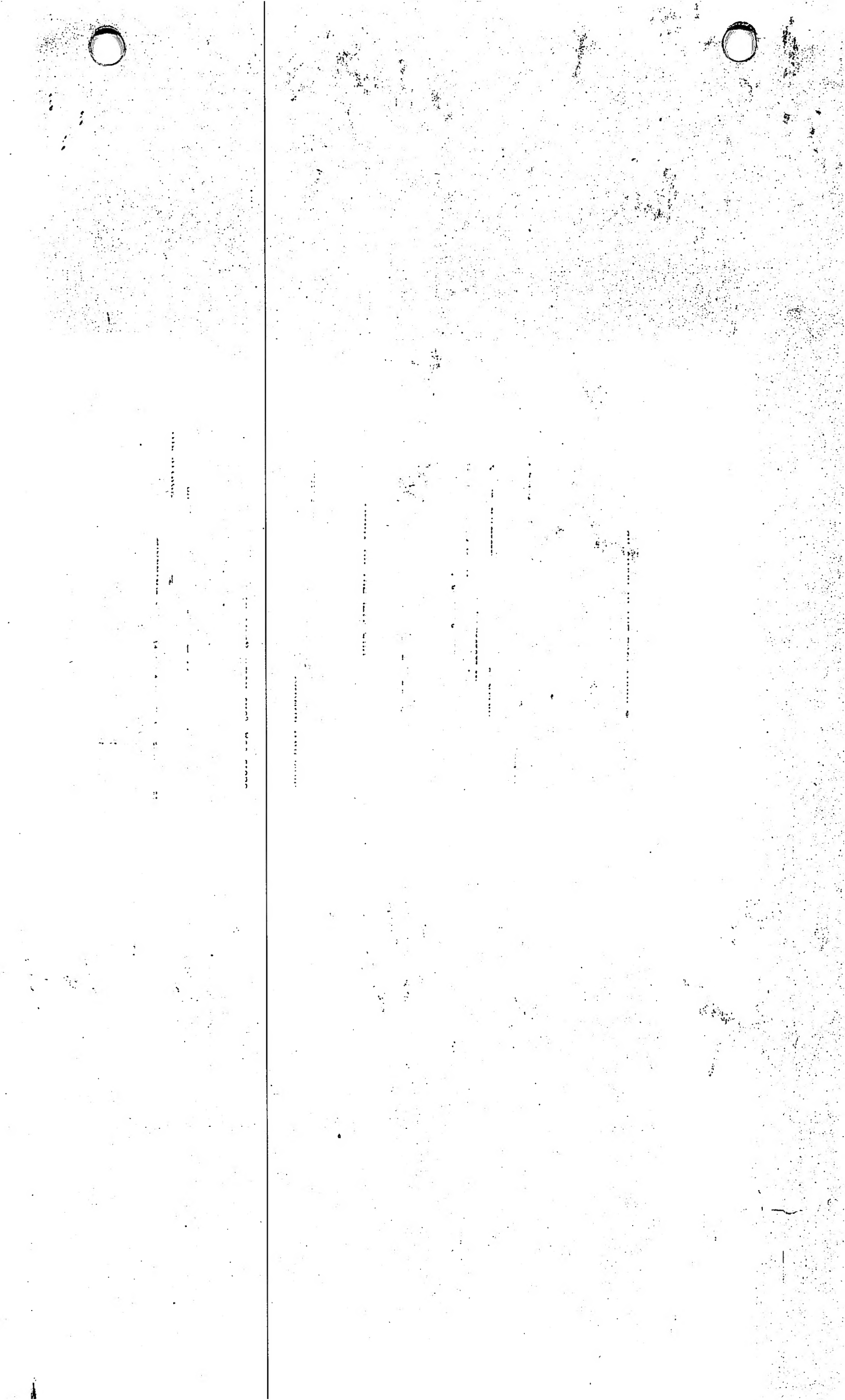
The day before the Indians arrived the owner of the agency store came to the blockhouse where the Mormons were staying to tell them that the Indians were planning to kill them. Joseph S. MacDonald, a lieutenant in the cavalry troop, describes the Mormon's hurried preparations:

The man who kept the store came over and said, "They intend killing everyone of you. I cannot see you killed for nothing. I think they will attack tomorrow night. Now, I have ammunition of all kinds, and as soon as it gets dark so the agent can't see you, send your men over and pack it into this house. All I ask is that you return that which you don't shoot. I have a two inch auger. Set your men to making port holes for yourselves. I have a forty gallon barrel. Fill it full of water for yourselves and pack in wood for use. I have a big rope. Sink some posts in front of the house, bore holes right through it, and put the rope through the holes and tie your horses to it so they (the Indians) can't run them off." We worked all night. Next morning, after breakfast, we felt pretty good. The old agent came over and looked around and finally said, "Gentlemen, do you know whose house this is?" I said, "Uncle's, I guess." He never answered and walked on looking at the port holes we had made until he came to one. When he looked through it he swore and said, "That is straight for my door!" The man that owned the port hole tapped him on the shoulder

¹¹William Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

William Wall
and his five wives,
Nancy, Erma,
Elizabeth, Suzie,
and Sarah





and said, "Yes, and you are the first Indian we intend to kill." I never saw a man get out of a house as quick and he didn't bother us any more.¹²

Indians came into the cedars the next night and camped. When morning came they began to form a line for attack.

Then a messenger from Tabby came in as fast as his horse could run and to our interpreter said, "Tabby is coming in on the charge and says that there are ten or fifteen unruly Indians painted black who intend to start shooting when they get close enough." Al Huntington, our interpreter, slapped him on the leg and told him to go back and tell Tabby that if they come in on the run we would commence shooting. The Indian left. Captain Wall said, "What did you send that word for?" Huntington replied, "I knew if they came in on the run some of them would shoot."

In about fifteen or twenty minutes they formed a line with Tabby on the left and came in on the walk. They surrounded the agent's house and Tabby got off his horse and went in. Captain Wall said, "I must know what is going on in that house. Lt. McDonald, you pick a man and stand in this door and don't let a red man in nor a white man out."¹³

Wall held a brief conference with Tabby in the agent's house while the expedition members stood at the gun ports awaiting the impending attack. He told of the gift of cattle and food and also of the Mormons' desire to talk of peace. Tabby said, "Tomorrow at sunup I will fetch ten warriors with me." The Captain accepted but warned Tabby not to come armed.

At sunup the Indians came. Every one of them was painted black with war clubs slung on their wrists and pistols hidden under their blankets. The block house was divided into two rooms with a door between. Wall's twenty-four men stood in the east room and the Indians

¹³Ibid., p. 9.

in the west. Lt. MacDonald stood in the door between the two parties. Wall and Tabby sat down together. Tabby spoke, telling the Indian grievances and how they had been created. The Captain interrupted, saying, "We have been at war; now we want peace. We are here to make peace. We must stop killing each other." The blackened Indians were displeased with Wall's proposal, but when they protested Tabby ordered them to be quiet.

The conference lasted all day. First Tabby spoke and then Wall. At times they both became angry. Tabby demanded that the Mormons kill a man in San Pete County. Wall refused, saying that the laws would not allow it. As evening approached Tabby agreed, in general, to the proposed peace settlement. His agreement was not binding on Blackhawk and the renegade Indians following him, but the peace settlement did adjust the very real differences between this chief and the Mormons. Twelve days after starting out the expedition returned home to anxious families and friends. They found a militia company prepared to go in search for the peace makers since many feared that they had been massacred by the Indians. Instead, the relieved people honored them with a party the night after their arrival.

Renegade Indians, however, continued to make raids on the valley stealing a few horses and cattle whenever they could. Another expedition with food for the Indians was sent out on the 8th of July but met with little success.¹⁴

The winter of 1866-67 severely taxed the Ute's food supply, and in March a hungry Tabby with his braves came to Heber to smoke the peace pipe with his white

¹⁴Wasatch Wave, Dec. 21, 1906, p. 7.



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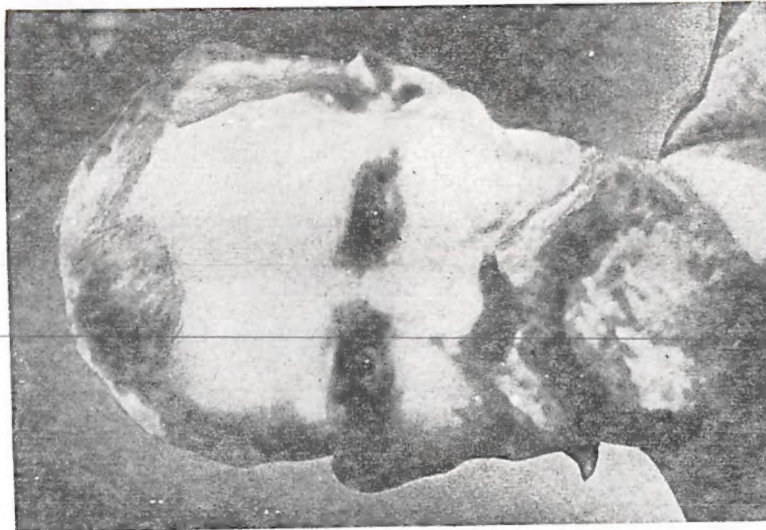
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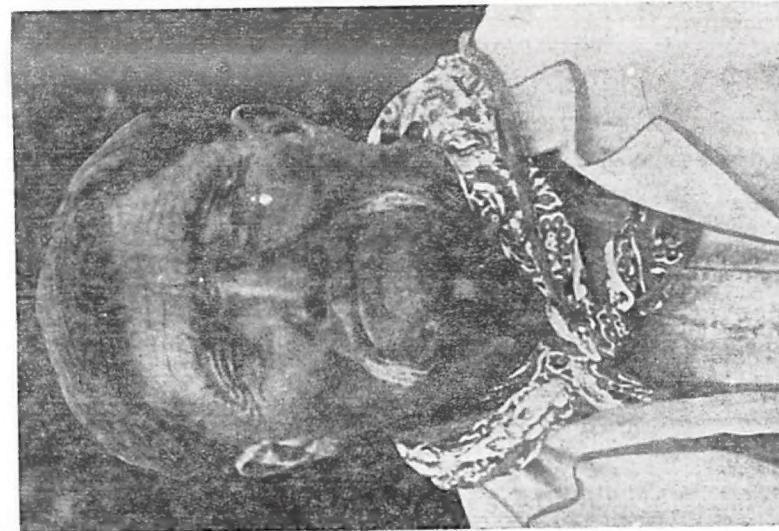
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Joseph S. McDonald



Chief Tabby

friends and eat some of their beef. A feast was held in the bowery at Heber; and the Indians were given blankets, flour, and eighty head of cattle to alleviate their suffering.¹⁵

* A brief account of the military leader, William Madison Wall, will illustrate the courageous leadership available to the Wasatch pioneers in meeting the Indian threat. He was the son of Isaac and Nancy Wall, born September 30, 1821, in Rottenham County, North Carolina. He joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1842, and when the saints left Nauvoo, Illinois, on their westward march he accompanied them. He assisted in organizing the Mormon Battalion, and in 1850 he crossed the plains in the seventh pioneer company as a captain of fifty.¹⁶ He settled in Provo, Utah, and was bishop of the Provo Fourth Ward there from 1852 to 1854. In 1856 the Church called him for a mission to Australia, where he served as President of the New South Wales Conference until June of 1857.¹⁷

His return from Australia in charge of a company of Mormon immigrants serves to illustrate Wall's courage and tenacity. Upon arriving in California he found much animosity. An immigrant train for California had been massacred at Mountain Meadows, in southern Utah, and feeling against the Mormon people was running high. During the night various groups of angered citizens sought his life even though he had just that day arrived by ship in San Pedro. Twice they threatened to break into his hotel room to kill him. Being unarmed, he tore

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶"Biographical papers of Andrew Jenson," (L. D. S. Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, 1916).

¹⁷*Journal History*, December 12, 1857.



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the wooden roller from his bed and in a calm voice told the gathering outside his door that he knew that the door was flimsy and that they could break in but that he would kill the first one who came in. There were no volunteers to be first. The next morning, upon leaving the hotel, a mob with ropes surrounded him. He felt his time to die had come and asked to speak a few last words.

I had one little wish to impress upon their minds, and that was that some of them had to die in the operation and I did not wish to kill any man that had a drop of honest blood in him; if there were any such men I begged them to withdraw and let the worst hounds they had remain to do the deed, as I should certainly kill three or four.¹⁸

The members of the mob suddenly felt very honest and withdrew.

William Wall was appointed Marshall of Provo and Utah County Sheriff shortly after his return, and because of the presence of the United States Army under General Johnston and the resultant friction between Mormons and anti-Mormons his time in office was seldom dull. Illustrative of this is the casual reference in the *Deseret News* of January 6, 1859, that last Friday evening when W. M. Wall, Marshall of Provo, was walking through the streets of that city a ball was shot through his hat and grazed his head and knocked him down.

He had many experiences dealing with the Indians which later proved invaluable to the people of Wasatch County. His ranch in the mouth of Provo Canyon was among the first settlements in the Provo Valley. He served as the first presiding elder of the valley and was

¹⁸*Ibid.*

later called upon when the people experienced the Indian troubles.

The success that the people had in dealing with the Indians was in no small measure due to the courage of leaders like William M. Wall.

